

1. A fluid inflatable packer comprising an inflatable element exposed to an interior of the fluid inflatable packer, wherein the inflatable element inflates and deflates with process fluid pressure in the interior of the fluid inflatable packer.
2. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 1 further comprising a mandrel having a plurality of openings along its length, wherein:
  - the inflatable element is disposed about the mandrel;
  - the interior of the fluid inflatable packer comprises an interior of the mandrel;
  - the inflatable element is exposed to the interior of the mandrel through the openings; and
  - the inflatable element inflates and deflates with process fluid pressure in the interior of the mandrel.
3. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 2 further comprising an inflation chamber formed between the inflatable element and the mandrel, wherein the inflatable element is inflated by unfiltered process fluid provided through the openings to the inflation chamber.
4. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 2 wherein the openings comprise at least twenty percent of the surface area of the mandrel.
5. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 2 wherein the openings comprise at least thirty-five percent of the surface area of the mandrel.
6. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 2 wherein the openings comprise at least fifty percent of the surface area of the mandrel.
7. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 2 wherein the openings comprise at least seventy percent of the surface area of the mandrel.

8. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 2 wherein the inflatable element comprises:
  - a bladder covering the openings;
  - a reinforcing element disposed outwardly of the bladder; and
  - a cover disposed outwardly of the reinforcing element.
9. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 2 further comprising first and second tensioning collars coupled to the mandrel, wherein:
  - the inflatable element is coupled to and disposed between the first and second tensioning collars; and
  - the first and second tensioning collars maintain the inflatable element in tension.
10. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 9 wherein one of the first and second tensioning collars is fixably secured to the mandrel.
11. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 9 wherein the first and second tensioning collars are fixably secured to the mandrel.
12. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 9 wherein one of the first and second tensioning collars is secured to the mandrel by a tensioning spring.
13. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 1 further comprising one or more connecting elements coupled between an upper sub and a lower sub, wherein:
  - the inflatable element is disposed about the connecting elements; and
  - the inflatable element is exposed to the interior of the fluid inflatable packer through openings between the connecting elements.
14. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 13 wherein the connecting elements comprise one or more bars.

15. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 13 wherein the connecting elements comprise one or more cables.
16. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 1 wherein at least half of the inflatable element is exposed directly to the interior of the fluid inflatable packer.
17. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 1 further comprising a screen disposed between the interior of the fluid inflatable packer and the inflatable element.

18. A fluid inflatable packer comprising:  
an inflatable element; and  
an inflation chamber formed within the inflatable element, wherein the inflatable element is inflated by unfiltered process fluid provided to the inflation chamber.
19. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 18 further comprising a mandrel having at least one opening along its length, wherein:  
the inflatable element is disposed about the mandrel;  
the inflation chamber is formed between the inflatable element and the mandrel; and  
the inflatable element is inflated by unfiltered processed fluid provided to the inflation chamber through the at least one opening in the mandrel.
20. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 19 wherein the at least one opening in the mandrel comprises at least twenty percent of the surface area of the mandrel.
21. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 19 wherein the at least one opening in the mandrel comprises at least thirty-five percent of the surface area of the mandrel.
22. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 19 wherein the at least one opening in the mandrel comprises at least fifty percent of the surface area of the mandrel.
23. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 19 wherein the at least one opening in the mandrel comprises at least seventy percent of the surface area of the mandrel.
24. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 19 wherein the inflatable element comprises:  
a bladder covering the at least one opening in the mandrel;  
a reinforcing element disposed outwardly of the bladder; and  
a cover disposed outwardly of the reinforcing element.

25. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 19 further comprising first and second tensioning collars coupled to the mandrel, wherein:

the inflatable element is coupled to and disposed between the first and second tensioning collars; and

the first and second tensioning collars maintain the inflatable element in tension.

26. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 25 wherein the first and second tensioning collars are each fixably secured to the mandrel.

27. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 25 wherein the first tensioning collar is fixably secured to the mandrel, and the second tensioning collar is secured to the mandrel by a tensioning spring.

28. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 18 further comprising one or more connecting elements coupled between an upper sub and a lower sub, wherein:

the inflatable element is disposed about the connecting elements; and

the inflatable element is exposed to the interior of the fluid inflatable packer through openings between the connecting elements.

29. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 28 wherein the connecting elements comprise one or more bars.

30. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 28 wherein the connecting elements comprise one or more cables.

31. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 18 wherein the unfiltered process fluid comprises at least five pounds of solids per gallon.

32. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 18 wherein the unfiltered process fluid comprises at least ten pounds of solids per gallon.

33. A fluid inflatable packer comprising:

an open mandrel having a longitudinal passageway;

an inflatable element disposed about the open mandrel, wherein the open mandrel directly exposes the inflatable element to process fluid and process fluid pressure in the longitudinal passageway; and

at least one tensioning collar maintaining the inflatable element in tension about the open mandrel when the fluid inflatable packer is in a deflated state and when the fluid inflatable packer is in an inflated state.

34. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 33 wherein the open mandrel comprises an elongated body with one or more openings comprising at least thirty-five percent of the surface area of the open mandrel.

35. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 33 wherein the open mandrel comprises an elongated body with one or more openings comprising at least fifty percent of the surface area of the open mandrel.

36. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 33 wherein the inflatable element inflates and deflates with process fluid pressure in the longitudinal passageway.

37. A method of treating a subterranean formation, comprising the steps of:
- pumping a process fluid to a fluid inflatable packer;
  - passing without filtration the process fluid through the inside of the fluid inflatable packer to an inflatable element of the fluid inflatable packer; and
  - inflating the inflatable element with the unfiltered process fluid.
38. The method of claim 37 wherein the step of passing comprises the step of passing the unfiltered process fluid through an open mandrel of the fluid inflatable packer to the inflatable element of the fluid inflatable packer.
39. The method of claim 38 wherein the unfiltered process fluid contains substantially no solids.
40. The method of claim 38 wherein the step of inflating comprises the step of inflating the inflatable element with process fluid pressure in the open mandrel; and
- further comprising the step of deflating the inflatable element with process fluid pressure in the open mandrel.



41. A method of treating a subterranean formation, comprising the steps of:
- inflating a fluid inflatable packer with process fluid pumped down a tubing string to a process tool coupled to the fluid inflatable packer; and
  - deflating the fluid inflatable packer by dropping process fluid pressure in the tubing string.

42. A method of treating a subterranean formation penetrated by a wellbore, comprising the steps of:

positioning a downhole tool assembly in the wellbore, wherein the downhole tool assembly comprises a packer and a process tool;

pumping a process fluid to the packer and the process tool;

inflating the packer by passing the process fluid into an inflation chamber of the packer;

performing the treatment using the process fluid;

terminating pumping of the process fluid; and

deflating the packer by passing the process fluid out of the inflation chamber as a result of a drop in process fluid pressure.

43. A fluid inflatable packer comprising:

an open spring mandrel having at least one opening along its length;

an inflatable element disposed about the open spring mandrel; wherein:

the inflatable element is exposed to an interior of the open spring mandrel through the at least one opening; and

the inflatable element inflates and deflates with process fluid pressure in the interior of the open spring mandrel.

44. The fluid inflatable packer of claim 43 wherein the open spring mandrel biases the inflatable element toward a deflated state.